

# Snapshots 2003

March 21

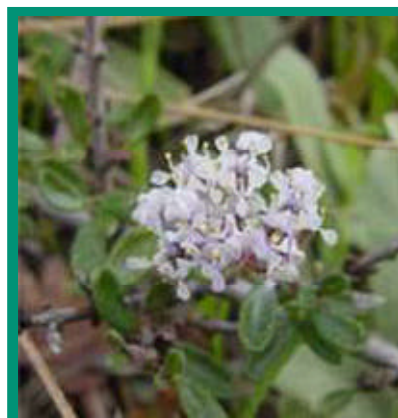
## California

### Project Protects Community and Its Rare Plants

The rapidly growing community of Cameron Park, California, located in the Sierra foothills outside of Sacramento, is a community at high risk of wildfires. Heavy fuel loads of manzanita, toyon, chamise and other chaparral vegetation in and around the community are an annual concern for firefighters and residents alike. In an effort to mitigate the situation, BLM's Folsom Field Office has initiated the Cameron Park Phase I fuels project on its Pine Hill Preserve situated in the hills above the town.

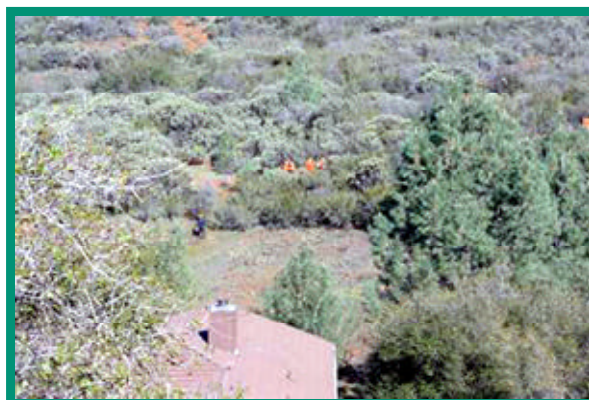
The preserve was a tangled sea of heavy chaparral cover growing right up to the yards of local residences. Beneath the fuel load, however, grew a variety of sensitive plants—some of them federally listed as endangered or threatened. The BLM, in concert with cooperating agencies, developed a plan to reduce the fuel load while protecting and even benefiting the sensitive plants. Many of the plants, including *Ceanothus roderickii*, actually need openings in the shrub canopy in order to successfully reproduce.

The fuel reduction treatment project was accomplished through the use of BLM and contracted California Department of Forestry and



*Ceanothus roderickii*

preserve, but also an increase in suitable habitat for endangered plants.



*Crews work in heavy fuels close to homes.*



*Fire crews work to thin brush in the Pine Hills preserve.*

With fire season still a few months off, the fuel break is already doing its job by offering local residents in the Cameron Park community a sense of security and new opportunities to discover their public lands and the rare species found only in their area.

Contact: Ken Hood, Fire Management Officer, Folsom Field Office, 916/985-4474



Highlighting BLM projects that support the National Fire Plan.

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## Local Effort Result In National Workshop

More than 120 people recently met in Bakersfield, California at a national Firewise Communities Workshop. The diverse group included ranchers, homeowners, real estate and insurance professionals, recreation and fire management specialists, elected officials, and other concerned residents. The goal for the participants was to learn about wildfires and their threat to residential areas within the wildland urban interface. Most participants came from Kern and Tulare Counties, two areas which last year experienced one of the worst fire seasons on record.



*More than 120 people from all walks of life participated in the Firewise workshop held in January.*

The workshop was sponsored by the California Fire Alliance and hosted by the Kern River Valley Fire Safe Council. This was the second in a series of workshops that have been specially designed to highlight California-specific wildfire-related issues within national Firewise principles. Members of the fire safe council recognized that hosting such an event could provide significant benefits as local people learned to address the risks and hazards associated with living by applying Firewise principles in their communities. They believed the workshop could provide opportunity for community networking, relationships to be built, and future partnerships to



*The Kern River Valley Fire Safe Council hosted the workshop and received kudos for all their efforts.*

develop. Comments received at the end of the workshop indicate that participants headed home with a renewed "can-do, will do" attitude that will translate into more fire safe communities in the Kern and Tulare County region of California. The Kern River Valley Fire Safe Council continues to be a leader in the area of local wildfire prevention and mitigation.

*Contact: Debbie Santiago, BLM Bakersfield Field Office, 661/391-6097*



*The Bakersfield Firewise Team ready to reduce wildfire threats in their communities.*



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## Fort Ord Gains Ten More Miles of Essential Fuel Break

Just outside Monterey, California lies an overgrown continuous sea of shrubs that has not seen fire in more than 70 years. The area is surrounded by dense, residential neighborhoods and exclusive “ranchettes.”

Complicating the scenario are large areas of land restricted to access because of unexploded ordnance on former training grounds of the U. S. Army.

To counter the potential threat of wildland fire in this volatile setting, the BLM’s Fuels Module located at Fort Ord along with hand crews from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection’s Gabilan Conservation Camp, have worked since July 2002 to improve and extend fuel breaks throughout the backcountry of the former Fort Ord Military Base.

Another ten miles of fuel thinning has recently been completed along Reservation Road. This segment of the project joins an existing network of roads, trails, and other breaks in the wildland vegetation that will protect neighboring communities from the threat of wildfire coming off these BLM lands.

Close coordination with military munitions experts was necessary to allow crews avoid areas of unexploded ordnance. The chaparral is being thinned by hand with the removed



*Section of Reservation Road before being treated.*

vegetation being chipped back onto the site. The resulting fuel breaks are from 100 to 300 feet wide, adjacent to existing trails and roads and will provide a defensible space and anchor points for suppression crews in the event of a wildfire.

*Contact: Jon Haag, Fuels Module Leader, BLM Hollister Field Office, 831/394-8314*



*Same section of the road following treatment.*



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## Otay Mountain International Border Fuel Break

Another section of an international fuel break located at the border between the United States and Mexico in San Diego County California, has recently been completed. The BLM Palm Springs fuels crew and crews contracted from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection restored the Otay Mountain section of the international fuel break after years of little or no maintenance.

This on-going project has several goals that include protection of life and property in adjacent communities, improved endangered species habitat, reducing the risk of large scale fire in the protected tecate cypress groves on Otay Mountain, and enhanced national security due to open areas that deter illegal immigration across border.

This section of the fuel break contained some of the most rugged terrain found anywhere along the 30 mile project. As a result, the width of the fuel break was widened to almost 600 feet in spots in order to remain effective if fire approaches from the steep slopes of the area. In addition, special considerations were required due to the rare and endangered species found in the area, including the critical habitat for the Quino checkerspot butterfly and the protected tecate cypress stands.



*Steep terrain required special consideration in this area of the break.*



*State and federal fire crews worked cooperatively on the fuel break project.*



*Fire crew members attending large pile burns on the international fuel break.*



*Tecate cypress.*



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Over 100 acres of decadent fuels were thinned and the removed brush piled during this past summer. Finally, in January of 2003 conditions were right to allow burning of the piled brush. During a ten day period beginning on January 21, all piles except those on the steepest slopes were burned. Those few remaining piles will wait for greener conditions to assure their safe burning.

The on-going work on the international fuel break is an excellent example of fire mitigation on an interagency basis that provides multiple benefits to the local communities in both the United States and Mexico.

*Contact: Ron Woychak, Fire Management Officer,  
BLM Palm Springs-South Coast Office, 858/674-2968*



*Large piles of cut brush being burned along the international border.*

## Idaho

### Salmon Field Office Teams Up to Build Fire Management Plan

The BLM Salmon Field Office is preparing the first draft of a fire management plan to identify priority public land areas and develop guidelines and alternatives for applying fuel treatments and managing fire suppression. The project is being developed as part of the National Fire Policy and National Fire Plan.

A local natural resource consulting firm, North Wind, Inc., was hired to help facilitate the process. The first phase initiated in mid-August 2001 by gathering information developed at working meetings. Working members included people from the Salmon Field Office, Salmon-Challis National Forest, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Lemhi County Commissioners, local ranchers and citizens. Options and concerns regarding fire management were thoroughly discussed at the meetings.

With assistance from North Wind, a consensus process was used to develop and publish a template of fire management needs by June 2002. Titled "Interdisciplinary Activity Plan for Fire Management," it identified ten geographic areas at

the field office watershed level with targeted issues or areas of concern. These are resource management issues, social and economic concerns, areas of wildland fire use for resource benefit, and the wildland urban interface. Vegetation types and associated acreages were also included as issues. The activity plan served not only to initiate the fire management plan, but will also be useful with other aspects of resource management.



*(l to r) Jim Tucker, fire use specialist, Dave Krosting, BLM Salmon field manager, Hadley Roberts, public representative, and Bill Diage, U.S. Forest Service discuss fire management issues during a public meeting.*



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